

# Alert

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## Colombia

# Floods in Arauca, Colombia

Geneva, 29 May 2015

### 1. Brief description of the emergency and impact

Since 22<sup>nd</sup> May, the Colombian north-east department of Arauca has experienced heavy rains creating emergency situations due to the floods caused by overflowed rivers. In Saravena municipality a red alert has been published due to the level of severity of the situation. Arauquita and Arauca municipalities are also on high alert as water levels continue to rise. Local authorities are working to get more accurate figures about the affected population, as several main roads have been affected, isolating communities and even municipalities, both in urban and rural sectors. Houses and public spaces such as schools, health clinics and child centres which were being used as emergency shelter have now also been flooded, leaving population without secure shelter. The municipal structures for water distribution have been affected, as well as household and community wells. The population now has to depend on the river water that is severely polluted due to the pollution from the oil industry in the upper river. Energy supply also has been affected. Most of the rural population depend for subsistence on small scale farming and livestock, initial reports reflect the destruction of crops and death of animals. In the seven communities located next to the river, already 3,000 persons have been affected, therefore the global number in the whole department will be much higher, closer to 30,000 persons is the current estimate.

In addition, the ombudsman's office has warned that the security situation could worsen in the Arauca department after the guerrilla group FARC withdrew their unilateral ceasefire putting the civilian population at higher risk. The guerrilla group ELN has also been active in Arauca. Both groups are present in Saravena.

### 2. Why is an ACT response needed?

The authorities have requested support from all humanitarian actors in the department. The Arauca department is heavily affected by the on-going internal armed conflict and the majority of the rural population already lives in conditions of vulnerability. The State institutions lack the capacity to respond in the affected rural communities, including as a result of limited access due to security restrictions, making the state emergency response very limited. LWF is present in the department and has capacity to respond to the emergency.

### 3. National and international response

The Civil Defence has been participating in evacuation and rescue activities, while the Disaster Risk actors from municipal and departmental levels are now activating their responses. The department

reports to be able to distribute 1,000 family food kits for 8-10 days, 1,000 cleaning kits/family and 3,000 mosquito nets. There are only 2 INGOs - LWF and the Colombian Red Cross - that work in the department and have the mandate to respond on natural disasters. OCHA is coordinating the international response and LWF is in coordination with them.

#### **4. ACT Alliance response**

LWF is responding in the department together with its local partners, and coordinates the response with the ACT Forum. Local member IELCO has offered emergency staff to support in the Needs Assessment.

#### **5. Planned activities**

LWF is planning to respond in two phases: 1<sup>st</sup> phase (1-3 months) with food aid, water purifications and filters and emergency NFIs. In the 2<sup>nd</sup> phase (4-12 months) it will provide recovery of livelihoods (crops and livestock), preparation of houses, water systems. The response is focused for 8 communities in Saravena, and possibly 4 or 6 communities in Arauquita. The LWF response will target 5,000 persons. LWF will submit an ACT Appeal.

#### **6. Constraints**

The municipal elections are in October 2015. The dynamics of the conflict and peace negotiations can affect the access to communities. Arauca is also highly affected by arms contamination.

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**Any funding indication or pledge should be communicated to the Head of Finance and Administration, Line Hempel ([Line.Hempel@actalliance.org](mailto:Line.Hempel@actalliance.org)).**

**For further information please contact:**

ACT Regional Representative, Carlos Rauda ([cra@actalliance.org](mailto:cra@actalliance.org) )

ACT Web Site address: <http://www.actalliance.org>